destinations/circuits, focusing on growth of hotel infrastructure, particularly budget hotels, improving road infrastructure to major tourist destinations, creation of world class collaterals, use of internet and web marketing, generating tourist publications, etc., as a result domestic tourist visits to States have increased from 270 million in 2002 to 309 million in 2003 (growth of 14.6%), and to 367 million in 2004 (growth of 18.8%).

Assistance to backward States under AIBP

†934. SHRI P.K. MAHESHWARI: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether a proposal regarding amendment in the parameters for providing assistance to the backward States under Accelerated Irrigation benefit Programme (AIBP) is under consideration of Government;

(b) whether different parameters have been set up for the States situated in plains and hill State for providing Central assistance to them; and

(c) whether Government will ensure that there would be no discrimination between the parameters adopted for providing assistance to the backward States like Madhya Pradesh and the hill States?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI JAI PRAKASH NARAYAN YADAV): (a) The proposal for relaxation in criteria of the Accelerated Irrigation benefits Programme (AIBP) was approved by the Cabinet during March, 2005 and the modified guidelines of the programme have already been issued. These guidelines have come into force with effect from 1st April, 2005.

(b) and (c) The Central Assistance will be provided in the form of 70% loan (to be raised by the State) and 30% grant for Non-Special Category States and 10% loan (to be raised by the State) and 90% grant for special Category States, namely, the seven North-Eastern States, the States of Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir and Uttaranchal and Koraput, Bolangir and Kalahandi districts of Orissa. The revised guidelines also provide that drought-prone areas, tribal areas and flood prone areas in the country, to be identified in consultation with the Planning Commission shall be treated at part with special Category States for funding under AIBP.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.